

New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

Chair: Peter Burling
Vice Chair: Katherine Hersh

Minutes

August 27, 2010

10:00 am

LOB 201

Present: Chair Peter Burling, Representative Candace Bouchard, Kerrie Diers, David Preece, Mark Brewer, Mike Izbicki, Nancy Larson, Jay Minkarah, Tim Moore, Steve Pesci, Ted Starkweather, Malcolm Taylor, Mike Pillsbury

I. Call to Order

II. Public Input – *Members of the public wishing to will be given an opportunity to address the NHRTA Board.*

MOU with NHDOT signed by Chair Peter Burling, Witnessed by Mike Izbicki

III. Minutes

- a. Minutes of May 28, 2010 Tim Moore moved to approve the minutes, David Preece seconded the motion; motion approved unanimously.

IV. NH Capitol Corridor Updates

- a. Plaistow MBTA - Tim Moore, Sean Fitzgerald, and Scott Bogle presented the proposed project (see powerpoint handout). Impact on local real estate estimated to be loss of \$24,000 from the tax rolls if station lot comes off tax rolls, but fees from parking and other sources can offset this. Title is proposed to be transferred to State, depending on funding. Increases in property values will increase, particularly within 1 -2 miles of station. Impacts to existing neighborhoods will be mitigated, given the benefits of access to commuter rail.

Chair Burling thanked them for their presentation and asked: What role can NHRTA play? Should we be more involved and active participants in the discussions? We need to figure out the legislative process that will be required if the grants are awarded.

Sean Fitzgerald clarified that we need champions and voices behind the project, and we have great partnership team. We need that kind of help.

Steve Pesci stated that this project doesn't change our focus, we're a statewide authority that should respond where opportunities are. If there are successes and wins here, they can translate into other NH projects.

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Steve Pesci would like to formally have NHRTA support this at CMAQ committee, TIGER, and next reauthorization bill.

What is the impact to the Downeaster as a result of this project? By moving layover facility north of Merrimack River Bridge, this could help in the long run.

Jay Minkarah agreed with the previous comments that this can set a positive precedent for the NH Capital Corridor project. All of these parties are the ones that we've been trying to coordinate with. Having a success here can be a positive for cooperation on other projects.

Tim Moore stated that we need a landowner for Westville home site (DOT or NHRTA). MBTA can't operate outside of MA, so they need to contract with an owner of the service (could be NHRTA).

What is relationship with DOT? Mike Pillsbury stated that we should turn to MOU in this case. The NHRTA provides guidance and direction - this discussion is just what we are doing. This is our primary responsibility to provide guidance and direction. DOT will submit applications. Mike Pillsbury apprised Chair Burling with regard to the events that transpired in submitting the TIGER II grant. The discussion we're having today is very pertinent in terms of setting priorities and proceeding. We're working under the agreement.

Steve Pesci stated that we should give DOT direction. Chair Burling summarized the sense of the meeting:

"The members of the NHRTA present wish to extend our thanks to the Rockingham Planning Commission and to the staff of the NH Department of Transportation for their expeditious response to the need for grant drafting relative to the Plaistow project; and to Tim Moore and the Town of Plaistow for their determined effort on behalf of the rail project for the Town.

And the said members wish to express our strong support for the Plaistow project, and our willingness to do what we can to make that project succeed."

David Preece stated that we need to be at the table for discussions with all of the players. Sean Fitzgerald agreed that it is important for NHRTA to be at the table with MBTA. Chair Burling asked what the time commitment might be. Tim Moore will let Peter Burling know if a meeting is scheduled. Peter will assist on the legal side of things, Mike Izbicki can help on the technical side, and others on Executive Committee

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will also participate as needed. Mike Izbicki will be lead person assigned and he will let everyone else on Executive Committee know about meetings.

- b. Status of Grant Application – FRA grant – no official word
- c. Next steps to secure \$1.9 million FTA funds – Mike Pillsbury stated that Kit Morgan had begun drafting the grant application, but was diverted to TIGER II grants, of which two were rail related – Plaistow and freight. He will return to writing the grant at this time.

Peter Burling asked Rep. Bouchard, “What do we need to do with the legislature?” Rep. Bouchard clarified that before construction of passenger rail (not freight), NHRTA and DOT need to have the operating budget approved by House and Senate. There is no prohibition on accepting the funds for planning.

With regard to Plaistow, we would need to file a bill explaining operating and capital costs. State of NH will be entering into a contract with MBTA similar to the RI partnership. NH will receive funds with MBTA committing to providing match. The expenses will be covered by CMAQ and TIGER funds for \$29 million. That would need to be presented to legislature in a bill. Operating costs are anticipated to be minimal due to layover, and operating costs will be covered by capital benefits or fare / parking revenue or additional CMAQ. Partnership agreement will need to go through Governor and Council process, and will have to work with legislature to file a bill.

MTBA will need to get authorization to operate in NH as well. Jay Minkarah asked if the intent is to file with legislature and if DOT was comfortable with the time frame. We can accept the funds, will need to get clarification if we can go to consultant selection, but we probably will be able to do that. Need approval from NH Legislature prior to construction.

Mike Izbicki asked for clarification if engineering was also excluded. Rep Bouchard stated that is probably open to interpretation. It is only construction that they are concerned about. Intent is to not prohibit planning or making progress on passenger rail, and not to be a road block. With regard to the NH Capitol Corridor project, we have plenty of time to address the question “how are we going to pay for rail?” which is the question that comes up frequently.

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David Preece asked if we have gone through environmental assessment work on the Plaistow project. Tim Moore stated that it will part of the project.

d. Amtrak update - none

V. Other Discussion

- a. State Rail Plan – We need to have an update next meeting of status
- b. Enfield bridge project – RR bridge portion is on hold.
- c. Other – David Preece distributed summary of white paper that shows the status of project as an information piece to be distributed to potential candidates. Does anyone object to the use of this piece? No objections.

VI. Non-public session - none

VII. Adjourn – 12:00 pm

Next Meeting will be held on October 1, 2010.